

HEALTH AND SAFETY FACTSHEET



Photo courtesy of Riverland Wines.
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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WINE INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

Hazardous Manual Tasks

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When working on a vineyard, many of the tasks that you may need to do will involve some of the following actions: lift, lower, push, pull, carry, move, hold or restrain an object. The object could be a post, a roll of high tensile wire, or even secateurs. Injury can result when those actions are done in an unsafe way or the object is awkward or too heavy to handle.

INJURIES FROM UNDERTAKING HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

Manual tasks can affect your health. They can cause changes to your muscles and joints that decrease how well they can work and thus increase the likelihood of injury. Injuries can include:

- sprains and strains to muscles, ligaments and tendons
- back injuries
- injuries or degeneration to joints and bones
- injuries or compression to nerves
- injuries to muscles and blood vessels as a result of hand-arm vibration, and
- chronic pain.

DIRECT RISK FACTORS

Manual tasks that involve the handling of objects, can become hazardous when you are exposed to risk factors that require your muscles to work beyond their capacity. These factors are:

- **Forceful exertions** – where heavy loads are placed on soft body tissue such as muscles, tendons, ligaments, and discs. Muscles fatigue with increased exertion and will injure if not given enough time to recover.
- **Awkward and static postures** – is any posture where the body is away from its comfortable, neutral position. Postures are only a problem when they are repeated frequently or performed for a long time. Working on tasks above shoulder height - where your arms are above your head - is a good example of an awkward posture that can cause damage to joints and muscles.
- **Vibration** – Vibration impacts differently depending on the how you are exposed. When the whole body is exposed, such as the seat of a tractor for a long period of time, then this can contribute to lower back injuries. When the hand or arm is exposed,

such as when working with air-operated, electric or petrol-powered tools, this can cause damage to blood vessels and nerve tissue, typically of the hand and fingers. This damage can become permanent with prolonged exposure.

- **Repetition** – Tasks that take a short period of time to complete, but are repeated over a longer time period, requires the same muscles and other soft tissues to be used continuously. Using the same muscles over a longer period contributes to their fatigue and risk of injury. Hand pruning is a good example of such a task.
- **Duration** – this can relate to the time to perform the task once, or perform the task repeatedly without a break. The longer a task takes, the greater the build-up of pressure on the muscles.

CONTRIBUTING RISK FACTORS

How the work is organised and your skills and fitness can also influence whether you get injured.

Contributing factors can include:

- the amount of work to be done
- lack of variety in a task so that the same body parts are constantly used
- how you handle a load
- the shape and composition of the load
- whether you have received any training on safe lifting
- working long hours
- whether tools are well maintained, and
- your overall fitness and knowledge of tasks being done.

STEPS TO PREVENT HARM

While the risk cannot be removed, things can be done to reduce it. Some options your employer could consider:

- provide a forklift and lifting aids to move objects and minimise carrying
- buy items such as chemicals in smaller 10 and 15kg containers
- have the correct tools available for a task such as long handled shovels for digging holes or electric secateurs for pruning
- have another worker to help you lift heavier or more difficult loads
- move you to different tasks to enable your muscles to rest where possible
- allow you to work at your own pace where possible
- provide training on safe lifting techniques or how you can assess a lifting risk, and
- keep equipment well maintained so that it works well when needed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions or want to seek advice about this factsheet, please contact SAWIA on **+61 8 8222 9277** or **admin@winesa.asn.au**